

The Solitary Reaper
by: William Wordsworth

Original Text	Paraphrase
Behold her, single in the field, Yon ¹ solitary Highland Lass! Reaping and singing by herself; Stop here, or gently pass! Alone she cuts and binds the grain, And sings a melancholy strain; O listen! for the Vale profound Is overflowing with the sound.	Look at her, alone in the field, One lonely Highland girl! Reaping and singing all alone; Stop and listen or pass by quietly! She cuts the heads off the grain by herself, And sings a sad song; Please listen! for the thoughtful valley Is enclosed by the sound.
No Nightingale did ever chaunt More welcome notes to weary bands Of travellers in some shady haunt, Among Arabian sands: A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard In spring-time from the Cuckoo-bird, Breaking the silence of the seas Among the farthest Hebrides ² .	No Nightingale ever sang More amazing notes to tired groups Of travelers in some dark trouble Among the desert; A voice so amazing has never been heard In the springtime from the Cuckoo-birds, Taking away the peace of the seas All the way to the farthest islands.
Will no one tell me what she sings?-- Perhaps the plaintive ³ numbers ⁴ flow For old, unhappy, far-off ⁵ things, And battles long ago: Or is it some more humble lay, Familiar matter of today? Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain, That has been, and may be again?	Can no one tell me what she is singing about?-- Maybe the mournful lines are For past, sad, far away things, And fights a long time ago: Or is for another small reason, A familiar feeling to all? Some normal sadness, loss, or hurt, That has happened, and may happen again?
Whate'er the theme, the Maiden sang As if her song could have no ending; I saw her singing at her work, And o'er the sickle bending;-- I listen'd, motionless and still; And, as I mounted up the hill, The music in my heart I bore, Long after it was heard no more.	Whatever the theme is, the girl sang As if her song had no ending; I saw her singing while she was working, And was bending over a sickle;-- I listened while not moving and being still; And, as I climbed up the hill, I bore the music in my heart; Long after I stopped hearing it.

¹ Over there

² a group of islands off the west coast of Scotland.

³ sad

⁴ verses

⁵ distant

Summary

Stanza 1:

Look at that girl, she is alone in the field, reaping and singing alone; one can stop and listen or pass by quietly. She is harvesting the plants by herself, and she sings a sad song. Although the valley is so deep, it is full of her sound of singing.

The first stanza is the introduction of the poet's meeting of a solitary Scottish rural girl who was reaping and singing a good and sad song.

Stanza 2:

No Nightingale ever sang such amazing songs to tired groups of travelers in the strong among the desert of the Arabia. Also he voice is much better than that of a Cuckoo-birds in the spring season.

the second stanza, the poet made two sharp comparisons of the melody to the sweet voice of a nightingale and the song sang by a cuckoo-bird in spring. Moreover, he stated that her song was far more beautiful than them.

Stanza 3:

The poet is asking if anyone can tell him what she is singing about. Maybe she is signing about the past or sad things that can happen to us all.

The third stanza is about the poet's speculation of the content of the song.

Stanza 4:

Whatever the theme is, the girl kept singing as if her song had no ending; I saw her singing while she was working, and was bending over a sickle. I listened and, as I climbed up the hill, I kept the music in my heart.

The fourth stanza serves as a conclusion in which the poet emphasizes the effect of the music on William Wordsworth.

Themes:

The poem mainly discusses the theme of poetry. Songs are a kind of poetry. Wordsworth said that poetry should be written in more ordinary language and simpler form so that all classes might appreciate it.

The second theme is that of nature. The poet is talking about the rural life and the sweet sounds of nightingales and cuckoo birds.

Figures of speech

a) Alliteration:

- 5- alone – and
- 9- No – Nightingale
- 10- welcome – weary
- 12- Among Arabian
- 15- silence – seas
- 17- will – what
- 18- plaintive – perhaps
- 19- for – far
- 23- some – sorrow
- 24- be – been / again – and
- 25- the – theme – the
- 26- her – have
- 27- saw – singing

b) Metaphor:

- "the valley profound"
He means that her music smoothly runs like the water in the valley.
- "Is overflowing with the sound"
The poet compares the valley to a river that flows and the sound to water.
- "...nightingale.....chant" / ".....welcome notes....."
The poet compares the nightingale to a band playing a sweet tone welcoming the travelers as they come.
- "Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow"
The poet is comparing the reaper's words as they are flowing like water.
- "The music in my heart I bore,"
The poet is describing the music as something that you can carry or keep.

c) Contrast:

- Stop X pass
- Shady haunt X Arabian Desert
- Motionless and still X I mounted up the hill

d) Hyperbole:

- "Breaking the silence of the seas"
The poet exaggerates the effect of the Cuckoo-bird's voice.
- "No nightingale did ever chant,"
The poet exaggerates the sweetness of the lady's voice.

e) Personification:

The voice can't break anything else so it is given a human quality.
So the solitary reaper is herself de-personified and made into something like a bird.

f) Rhetorical Question:

"Will no one tell me what she sings?"
"Is it some more humble lay?"
The poet is asking exclamatory questions expecting no answer.

g) Poetic diction:

- What e'er = Whatever
- O'er = Over
- Listen'd = Listened
- In line (7) : There is an Inverted order .
- In Line (17): There is a Rhetorical Question .
- In Line (31): There is an Inverted order .

h) Repetition:

27- her / her

i) Apostrophe:

7- O listen

j) Visual images:

- The image of the girl cutting and binding the grain.
- The image of the mountains and the valley.
- The image of the Highland Islands and the Sand Desert.
- The image of the girl swings the sickle.
- The image of the listener on his horse walking up the mountain.

k) Auditory Images:

- The sound of the girl singing, and the sound of the water in the valley.
- The voice of the two-birds, the nightingale and the cuckoo.
- The voice of the girl which breaks the silence of the nature.
- The sound of the girl's song which is sad and full of sorrow.
- The sound of the girl's song which hangs in the listener's heart for a long time and helps him to go on.

Tone:

The tone of the poem is that of curiosity and praise at the theme of the song that the solitary reaper is singing. The narrator praises the singing of the girl.

The tone and atmosphere of this poem is very calm, emotional, peaceful and often sad.

Sound:

In the four stanzas, the first and fourth stanzas follow strictly the rhyme pattern ABABCCDD, while the second and third stanzas are in the pattern of ABCBDDEE. Moreover, there are many repetitions of vowel and consonant sounds, making emphasis, unity and harmony. For example, the repetition of /ing/ sounds occurs throughout the poem. (single, reaping, singing, sing, nightingale, thrilling, spring, breaking, thing, ending, bending) Even in the same line, there are the same sound, for example, sorrow, loss, or pain (Line 23) or listened, motionless and still (Line 29), etc.

Meter:

The four eight-line stanzas of this poem are written mainly in an iambic tetrameter.

"The Solitary Reaper" is a poem consists of four eight-line stanzas (32 lines total). Most of the poem is in iambic tetrameter. The rhyme scheme for the first and last stanzas is ABCBDDEE, and for the second and third stanzas is ABABCCDD. It was written by William Wordsworth. A major English Romantic poet who, with Samuel Taylor Coleridge, produced "Lyrical Ballads" in 1798; an important work in the English Romantic movement, which was republished with a (preface) in 1800, along with the author's name.

In the first stanza the speaker comes across a beautiful girl working alone in the fields of Scotland (the Highland). She is "Reaping and singing by herself." He tells the reader not to interrupt her. One can stop and listen or pass by quietly. She is harvesting the plants by herself, and she sings a sad song. Although the valley is so deep, it is full of her sound of singing. The first stanza is a description, and the idea of being alone is stressed. Also the poet used imperative verbs like "behold - stop - pass - listen".

In the second stanza, he is comparing her singing to two kinds of birds, one of the east, and the second of the west. He says that no Nightingale ever sang such amazing songs to tired groups of travelers in the desert of the Arabia. Also her voice is much better than a Cuckoo-bird in Spring. The poet stated that her song was far more beautiful than them.

In the third stanza, the poet does not understand the words being sung by the beautiful young lady. He is asking if anyone can tell him what she is singing about. He is forced to imagine what she might be singing about. He supposes that she may be singing about old sad things that happened in a distant land, or a battle which may have taken place years ago. Or some ordinary things that can happen to us all, some sadness that has happened in her own time and will happen again. The third stanza is interrogative, it contains rhetorical questions.

In the fourth stanza, whatever the theme is, the girl kept singing, as if her song had no ending. She sang while she was working, and was bending over a sickle. For a long time the poet listened to the song, enchanted and transfixed. As he moved up the hill, he continued to carry the music in his heart even after he could no longer hear it. The fourth stanza serves as a conclusion in which the poet emphasizes the effect of the music on him.

To sum up, the poem mainly discusses the theme of poetry. Songs are a kind of poetry. Wordsworth said that poetry should be written in more ordinary language and simpler form so that all classes might appreciate it. Also another theme is nature, the poet is talking about the rural life and the sweet sounds of nightingales and cuckoo birds.